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Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
IO-13 CU-02 DHA-02 BIB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
ACDA-07 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 /078 W
----------221604 130864 /46
O R 221031Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1673
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CSCE, SHUM, RO
SUBJ: RCP SECRETARY BURTICA'S VIEWS ON DISSIDENTS
AND WESTERN PROPAGANDA
REF: BUCHAREST 1105

1. SUMMARY. THERE FOLLOW EXTRACTS FROM A CONVERSATION I HAD FEBRUARY 19 WITH RCP SECRETARY FOR PROPAGANDA AND IDEOLOGY AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CORNEL BURTICA
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ON CURRENT ROMANIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD DISSIDENTS AND WESTERN PROPAGANDA IN THE LIGHT OF CEAUSESCU'S FEBRUARY 17 ATTACK ON "ONE-SIDED" INTERPRETATIONS OF HELSINKI AND ON "TRAITOROUS" BEHAVIOUR BY SOME ROMANIANS NOW LIVING ABROAD. IN VIEW OF BURTICA'S POSITION, THE EXCERPTS ARE GIVEN AT SOME LENGTH.
END SUMMARY.

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2. AFTER FINISHING DISCUSSING WITH BURTICA CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROBLEMS I ASKED HIM EVEN THOUGH HE WAS PRESSED TO ELABORATE ON CEAUSESCU'S RECENT SPEECH. HE ENDED UP TALKING FOR OVER FIFTEEN MINUTES.

3. FIRST OF ALL, HE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RECALL THE ROMANIAN BELIEF THAT ALL PARTS OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT WERE EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT. THEREFORE, WHEN NO REAL STEPS ARE TAKEN TOWARD DISARMAMENT, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT COUNTRIES LIKE ROMANIA GET UPSET WHEN ONLY CERTAIN ASPECTS OF HELSINKI ARE ARE STRESSED. BESIDES, THE THIRD BASKET IS INTERPRETED IN THE WEST AS IF ITS WHOLE CONTENTS WERE LIMITED TO MARRIAGE CASES WHILE THE IMPORTANCE OF INCREASING CULTURAL TIES, PROMOTING FESTIVALS, SYMPOSIA, MEETINGS OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES, HISTORIANS, LITERARY FIGURES-ALL THESE ARE LARGELY IGNORED. PEOPLE IN

THE WEST UNDER THE GUISE OF "HUMANITARIAN" PROBLEMS CREATED A HUE AND CRY ALL OUT OF PROPORTION.

4. TO BE PERFECTLY CLEAR, HE SAID, TAKE THE GOMA CASE. "WE COULD HAVE ARRESTED HIM, BUT THAT WOULD HAVE GIVEN HIM TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE, ALTHOUGH SOME OF HIS ACTIVITIES ARE CLEARLY OUTSIDE THE LAW." OR TAKE MANOLIU, WHO IS APPARENTLY A PAINTER, THOUGH AGAIN NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW HIS WORK. HE DOESN'T WANT TO WORK LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HERE; HE'S GOT HIS PASSPORT FOR TRAVEL ABROAD, BUT NONE OF THE COUNTRIES THAT ARE CLAMORING FOR "HUMAN RIGHTS" WILL SO FAR TAKE HIM BECAUSE HE HAS NO WAY OF SUPPORTING HIMSELF. OR LOOK AT THE WAY THE NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT OR THE WEST GERMAN CORRESPONDENT HAS BEEN MOSEYING AROUND TRYING TO INVERVIEW PEOPLE LIKE GOMA AND MANOLIU AND PAYING NO ATTENTION TO ANY OF THE WRITERS OR PAINTERS WHO HAVE SOME TALEN. /WE COULD HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO EXPEL THEM, BUT WE DIDN'T BECAUSE THAT WOULD SERVE NO REAL PURPOSE." DON'T MISUNDERSTAND US ON THIS WHOLE QUESTION, BURTICA ADDED AT THIS POINT. "WE DON'T AGREE WITH THE IDEA OF ARRESTS AND ALL THAT SORT OF THING." BUT INTENTIONAL PROVOCATIONS FROM THE OUTSIDE ARE SOMETHING WE CANNOT ACCEPT. WHAT IS ALSO DISTRESSING FOR ROMANIA IS THAT SOME HEADS OF STATE HAVE STARTED GIVING OUT ADVICE TO OTHERS. IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE DURING ELECTION PERIODS THAT YOU GET CERTAIN EXAGGERATIONS, BUT WHEN IN THE POST-ELECTION PHASE POLITICAL LEADERS START MAKING

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UNCALLED-FOR STATEMENTS IT'S ANOTHER THING. I INTER-
RUPTED TO ASK BURTICA IF HE HAD OUR NEWLY ELECTED
PRESIDENT IN MIND. HE SAID HE DID NOT WANT TO TALK
ABOUT SPECIFIC FOREIGN LEADERS. THE US AND ROMANIA
HAD GOOD RELATIONS AND IT WAS IN BOTH COUNTRIES'
INTEREST THAT THEY STAY THAT WAY.

5. THEN THERE IS OF COURSE, BURTICA WENT ON TO SAY,
THE WHOLE BUSINESS OF RFE. IT CONTINUES TO POUR
DISTORT-
IONS AND FABRICATIONS OVER THE AIR. "REF
LITERALLY CAN FIND ABSOLUTELY NOTHING GOOD TO SAY
ABOUT ROMANIA." - FROM ITS LEADERSHIP TO FOOD SUPPLY
FOR THE PEOPLE. HOW IS ROMANIA TO INTERPRET THE
CONTINUED SPONSORSHIP OF RFE BY THE US GOVERNMENT, A
GOVERNMENT WITH WHICH IT HAS GOOD RELATIONS - AS
SOMEHOW REFLECTING THE SPIRIT OF THE HELSINKI
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ACCORDS? ALL THESE ACTIONS WERE, TO BE QUITE FRANK,
NOTHING LESS THAN AN INCITEMENT TO ENMITY AMONG
PEOPLES.

6. I TOLD BURTICA THAT SINCE HE HAD GONE WELL OVER
THE FIVE MINUTE LIMIT HE HAD SET FOR HIMSELF AND SINCE HIS TIME
WAS SHORT,
I WOULD HIT ONLY A FEW MAJOR ASPECTS MYSELF. IN THE
FIRST PLACE, I SAID, US POLICY IN NO WAY COULD BE
CONSTRUED AS PROMOTING ENMITY AMONG PEOPLES. SECONDLY,
THE US WAS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO CARRYING OUT ALL PARTS
OF THE HELSINKI AGREEMENT. IF WE STRESSED ONE PART OR
ANOTHER IT WAS BECAUSE WE FELT COUNTRIES LIKE ROMANIA
WERE NOT GIVING THAT PART SUFFICIENT ATTENTION.
THIRDLY, HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND
HOW SERIOUS A MATTER HUMAN RIGHTS WAS FOR US, AS
PRESIDENT CARTER WAS TAKING GREAT PAINS TO MAKE VERY
CLEAR. BURTICA INTERRUPTED TO SAY THAT AFTER ALL "THE
ESSENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS WAS THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND WORK.
HOW COULD UNEMPLOYMENT BE CONSIDERED COMPATIBLE WITH
HUMAN RIGHTS?" I RESPONDED THAT IT WAS THE RIGHT TO
A FREER LIFE THAT WAS EQUALLY IMPORTANT.

7. ON THE SUBJECT OF RFE, I REMINDED BURTICA THAT

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I HAD SUGGESTED LAST YEAR THAT ONE OF HIS COLLEAGUES AND ONE OF MINE MEET TO LOOK AT SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE GOR FOUND OBJECTIONABLE, BUT HIS SIDE HAD NEVER FOLLWED THROUGH DESPITE OUR REMINDERS. I REMINDED HIM TOO THAT SO LONG AS THERE WERE OBSTACLES TO THE FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION, THE US POSITION ON RFE WOULD BE DIFFERENT FROM ROMANIA'S. HE RETORTED THAT ROMANIA COULD JAM THESE BROADCASTS, BUT IT WASN'T WORTH THE EXPENSE AND IN FACT SOMETIMES THE BROADCASTS
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WERE SO EXAGGEREATED THAT THEY ACTUALLY HELPED THE GOVERNMENT. HE COULD, HE THEN SAID, GO AROUND FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY AND RECRUIT PEOPLE TO APPEAR ON THE AIR FOR BROADCASTS AIMED AT WESTERN COUNTRIES - A PROFESSOR IN THE FRG WHO HAD LOST HIS JOB ECAUSE HE WAS A COMMUNIST, SOMEONE UNEMPLOYED IN THE UK, SOMEONE

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IN THE STATES WHO WASN'T GETTING AHEAD BECAUSE OF HIS COLOR OR IS IN TROUBLE WITH THE LAW. THERE ARE DISSATISFIED PEOPLE EVERYWHERE, INCLUDING ROMANIA, WHO COULD BROADCAST FOR SOMEONE. BUT THIS WAS NOT ROMANIA'S WAY OF DOING THINGS. AS FOR THE US, RFE WAS OUR AFFAIR BUT FRANKLY WE NEEDED TO KNOW IT RAISED REAL QUESTIONS HERE.

8. AT THE END, BURTICA AGREED IT WOULD BE WORTHWHILE LOOKING AT A SPECIFIC PERIOD BH RFE BROADCASTS AND SAID I

SHOULD DISCUSS THIS WITH HIS COLLEAGUE POPESCU WHO IS NOW PARTY SECRETARY FOR THE MEDIA.

9. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE REGIME IS UPSET OVER ITS DISSIDENTS, SMALL IN NUMBER AS THEY ARE, AND PERHAPS EVEN MORE UPSET OVER WESTERN HANDLING OF THE PHENOMENON. EVEN THOUGH THE ROMANIANS WHO ARE PREPARED TO JOIN GOMA ARE NEITHER NUMEROUS NOR WELL KNOWN, THIS IS STILL THE FIRST MANIFESTATION OF ANYTHING LIKE OVERT DISSIDENCE IN ROMANIA IN THIRTY YEARS. IT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE THE LAST, IF ONLY BECAUSE OTHERS WILL SEE THEIR CHANCE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PRE-BELGRADE PERIOD TO LEAVE ROMANIA, WHICH SO FAR SEEMS TO BE THE PRIMARY MOTIVATING FACTOR. ROMANIA'S DILEMMA, AS ILLUSTRATED BY BURTICA, IS NOT TO BE LUMPED WITH THE CZECHS OR THE SOVIETS LEST ITS RESTRICTIVE IMAGE ABROAD BE EVEN FURTHER REINFORCED AND DO DAMAGE TO ITS LARGER INTERESTS AT BELGRADE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE WORD HAS TO BE GOTTEN OUT
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CLEARLY AT HOME THAT NOT ALL THAT MUCH HAS CHANGED.

10. DETAILED MEMCON FOLLOWS.
BARNES

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUCHAR01122
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770061-0498
Format: TEL
From: BUCHAREST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770222/aaaaatqo.tel
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Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUCHAREST 1105
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3268671
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RCP SECRETARY BURTICA\'S VIEWS ON DISSIDENTS AND WESTERN PROPAGANDA
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, RO, CSCE, (BURTICA, CORNEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b945f2c3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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